

Message Text

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46

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAM-01 SAB-01 SCCT-01 AID-05 OMB-01

IO-10 EUR-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /085 W

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R 221108Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3242

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1467

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, LE

SUBJ: LEBANESE DISTURBANCES

1. COS SHIHABI DISCUSSED WITH AMBASSADOR APRIL 21 RECENT PALESTINIAN-PHALANGE CLASHES IN BEIRUT. HE DEPLORED THE BREAKDOWN OF LEBANESE PUBLIC ORDER IN SAME TERMS AS HE HAD DISCUSSED SIDON DISTURBANCES OF LAST FEBRUARY REITERATING HIS VIEW THAT SUCH UPHEAVALS AND INSECURITY SERVED NO ONE'S INTERESTS. AS HE HAD DONE DURING SIDON AFFAIRS, SHIHABI SAID HE MAINTAINED CLOSE CONTACT THROUGHOUT THE LAST TWO WEEKS WITH LEBANESE INTERNAL SECURITY AND VARIOUS PLO ELEMENTS INCLUDING SAIQA. HE SAID THAT SYRIA HAD SPARED NO EFFORT TO HELP RESTORE LEBANESE PUBLIC ORDER THROUGH THESE CONTACTS.

2. ON THIS OCCASION HIS TASK, SHIHABI ASSERTED, HAD BEEN COMPLICATED BY THE MURDERS AND OTHER PROVOCATIONS BY PHALANGISTS OF SYRIAN CITIZENS WORKING IN BEIRUT. SHIHABI AT FIRST ARGUED THAT THE SYRIAN WORKERS HAD

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BEEN SINGLED OUT BY THE PHALANGISTS WHO WERE MOTIVATED

BY SECTARIAN CONSIDERATIONS AND READY TO PUSH LEBANON INTO A RELIGIOUS WAR. I OBSERVED THAT EVEN IF THIS WERE THE PHALANGIST MOTIVATION, THERE NO NEED TO SINGLE OUT SYRIANS; THE PHALANGE COULD JUST AS WELL HAVE PICKED ON LEBANESE MOSLEMS. SHIHABI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT ATTACKS ON SYRIANS MIGHT IN LARGE MEASURE HAVE BEEN COINCIDENTAL IN THAT SYRIAN WORKDERS ARE PARTICULARLY NUMEROUS IN BEIRUT'S AIN RUMMANEH DISTRICT, THE AREA OF THE ORIGINAL CONFLICT.

3. I ASKED WHETHER BUTROS DIB'S VISIT HERE HAD HAD ANY CONNECTION WITH THE DISTURBANCES. SHIHABI NEITHER CONFIRMED NOR DENIED THIS, POINTED OUT THAT DIB HAD COME TO ADDRESS A SYRIAN LITERARY SOCIETY BUT HAD ALSO CARRIED A SPECIAL MESSAGE, WHOSE CONTENTS SHIHABI CLAIMED NOT TO HAVE READ, FROM FRANGIEH TO ASAD.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PALESTINIANS, POLITICAL SITUATION, UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975DAMASC01467
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750142-0346
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750426/aaaaaxqq.tel
Line Count: 78
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 AUG 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <02 SEP 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANESE DISTURBANCES
TAGS: PINS, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006